

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

July 10, 2012

Motion to Address Urgent Safety, Health and Environmental Hazards at Horse Stables within the West Rancho Dominguez – Victoria Community Standards District

On June 18, 2012, a fire broke out in a portion of a horse stable located at 13107 Athens Way in the unincorporated community of Athens, where three horses and a goat perished. While the arson investigation report prepared by the Sheriff's Department's Arson Explosives Detail lists the cause of the fire as undetermined, illegal electricity taping, unsafe wiring and open flame cooking have been observed to occur at the stables.

While the property is zoned as M-½ and horse stables are an allowable use within the zone, there have been countless serious violations within the jurisdiction of several Los Angeles County departments, including: Sheriff, Fire, Animal Care and Control, Public Works, Regional Planning, Public Health, District Attorney and County Counsel that date back to 2007.

The horse stables are located on two parcels, approximately an acre and a half in size, flanked by several streets and alleys, resulting in different street addresses. All of the property is owned by one absentee owner. Despite numerous violations from County departments, the owner has not made a sufficient effort to sustainably remedy the public safety and public health concerns identified on the site. The stables are divided into sections, and are rented out to stable operators, who in turn rent out stalls to individual horse owners.

This site, which is known by several names, including the Fig Stables and the Athens on the Hill Stables, have been the site of numerous fires, building and safety citations, animal cruelty cases, and criminal investigations. Some of these horses have been observed to suffer from undernourishment, and have had many medical issues related to the unsanitary conditions in which they live.

MOTION

MOLINA _____

RIDLEY-THOMAS _____

KNABE _____

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MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

July 10, 2012

PAGE 2

-MORE-

In addition, when conducting the investigation into the most recent fire, the Sheriff's investigators spoke with an individual who stated that he was the "live in caretaker". Los Angeles County investigators from several agencies have indicated that people have been known to live on this property, which is not permitted by Los Angeles County Code.

While the violations are significant, these stables have provided a low-cost, accessible alternative for horse lovers, and some of the stable renters provide children in the neighborhood with recreational and educational activities that reinforce responsible behavior.

Due to the complex and numerous issues involved on this site, and the immediate need to develop appropriate standards so that the horse owners are able to access safe, clean and code compliant facilities for their horses as well as themselves, new standards should be considered before any new development of the site takes place. In addition, the owner should be held accountable for the condition of the site and the unsafe and unhealthy environment to which his tenants are exposed. The various County departments that are involved in regulating this facility should also be convened to develop a corrective action plan for this site, as well as to identify policy recommendations to ensure comprehensive, coordinated and timely compliance on properties with chronic violations in the future.

The conditions at the Athens Horse Stables pose urgent environmental, public health and safety hazards. It is crucial that all the horses are removed in short order and that horse owners and other individuals stay off the premises until the hazards are remedied.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct County Counsel, in coordination with the Departments of Animal Care and Control, Public Works, Regional Planning, Public Health and any other relevant Departments, to place an urgency ordinance on the Board of Supervisors' agenda for the July 17, 2012 meeting that would prevent any establishment or development of equestrian facilities within any zone of the West Rancho Dominguez – Victoria Community Standards District where equestrian uses are authorized so that a review of appropriate standards can be fully analyzed and recommended;

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MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

July 10, 2012

PAGE 3

2. Direct County Counsel to report back to the Board of Supervisors by July 20, 2012, and monthly thereafter, on the status of any legal action to address the nuisance activities on the Athens Horse Stable property; and
3. Direct the taskforce that has already been assembled by the Chief Executive Officer, that consists of the Departments of Animal Care and Control, Public Works, Regional Planning, Fire, Sheriff, District Attorney, Public Health and County Counsel to accomplish the following:
 - a. Place on a future agenda for the Board of Supervisor's consideration a Corrective Action Plan for the Athens Horse Stable Property, that includes specific strategies to remedy the land use, environmental health and safety issues that pertain to the site; and
 - b. Report back to the Board of Supervisors within 90 days with policy recommendations to prevent similar unresolved and compounded multi-agency code violations on properties within unincorporated areas in the future.

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